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CDC Publishes Guidelines for Improved Data on U.S. HIV Epidemic

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Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published guidelines on national HIV surveillance to assist states in the design and implementation of effective systems to monitor the course of their local epidemics. We have entered an era in which HIV prevention needs are greater than ever before, and accurate data about where new HIV infections are occurring are critical to ensure scarce HIV prevention programs are directed where they can do the most good.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, CDC has used AIDS cases to monitor the course of HIV and AIDS. In the wake of treatment advances, which have slowed the progression from HIV to AIDS for many individuals, data on AIDS cases alone are no longer reflective of new HIV infections. Although data on AIDS cases will continue to be important in evaluating access to care and in identifying changes in disease trends, they can no longer be reliably used alone to direct prevention efforts.

Data that clearly identify the leading edge of the epidemic are urgently needed. We believe publishing these *Guidelines for National HIV Surveillance* is a significant step forward in preventing and controlling HIV in the United States. The *Guidelines* advise state health departments on the best practices to ensure both the confidentiality and quality of HIV data. At the same time, CDC's policy allows flexibility for states to choose the method of HIV reporting they deem most appropriate for their needs. We believe these guidelines will ultimately help state and local communities better target their efforts to reach individuals in greatest need with HIV prevention, treatment, and care.